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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQ'S ARAB ENGAGEMENT: EGYPTIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
ABOUL GHEIT VISITS

REF: CAIRO 2141

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Robert Ford for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On October 5 with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Aboul Gheit made a surprise visit to Baghdad. Accompanied by Egyptian Oil Minister Sameh Fahmy, Aboul Gheit met with Prime Minister Maliki, Foreign Minister Zebari and Defense Minister Mufriji in Baghdad. He then traveled with Zebari to Sulaymaniyah for a two-hour meeting with President Talabani.

¶2. (C) In an October 6 lunch hosted by Ambassador Crocker for visiting Deputy Secretary Negroponte, FM Zebari reported that the visit went very well. Aboul Gheit, Zebari said, conveyed Egypt's positive assessment of Iraq's improved political and security situation and said Egypt wants to reopen an embassy in Baghdad. He did not offer specific timelines for when this would happen. As part of the visit, Zebari took the Egyptians to the IZ villa properties where a prospective Egyptian embassy would be located. According to one of Zebari's aides, the Egyptians spent 45 minutes looking at the villas. Zebari noted that Aboul Gheit expressed interest in two villas, rather than one, for the future Egyptian diplomatic compound. Without going into details, Zebari noted that some of the day's discussions focused on Egyptian interest in the Iraqi energy sector.

¶3. (C) Comment: Aboul Gheit is the latest in a string of senior Arab officials to come to Iraq since the beginning of June. His visit is yet another positive sign that Iraq's neighbors see it in their own interests to support the GOI and be seen doing so. Given Egypt's weight in region, Aboul Gheit's visit will likely spur continued progress in this area. Other Arab diplomatic events include the October 3 post-Ramadan return of UAE Ambassador al-Shehhi (he presented credentials September 4), the planned October 7 arrival of Bahraini Ambassador-designate Maliki, the October 13 arrival of Arab League Ambassador Khelaf, and expected arrivals of a Jordanian ambassador. Zebari mentioned in passing that he still expects the Kuwaiti Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to visit Baghdad. As this cable was being sent we had word that UAE Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed was arriving in Baghdad.

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